



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Second Round of Macedonian Municipal Elections, March 27, 2005

As delivered by Charge d'Affaires Paul W. Jones
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 7, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States fully concurs with ODIHR's preliminary findings and conclusions regarding the second round of local elections in Macedonia on March 27th. On the positive side, we agree with ODIHR's assessment that the elections were generally conducted in an orderly and well-organized manner in most parts of the country.

On the other hand, we also agree with ODIHR that, despite some efforts, the Government of Macedonia failed to adequately address the shortcomings identified in the first round. Specifically, it did not meet key OSCE commitments guaranteeing universal and equal suffrage and ballot secrecy.

We also note with concern that serious irregularities, including ballot stuffing and other blatant violations of electoral code, were observed again by ODIHR monitors in several areas, particularly in western and northern Macedonia.

We call again on the responsible government authorities to investigate and prosecute those implicated in electoral violations.

We also call on the leaders of the political parties in those areas to publicly condemn actions, including those committed by some of their supporters, that violated the electoral code, and that undermined Macedonia's democratic system.

We urge the Government of Macedonia to heed ODIHR's recommendations and to take immediate steps to bring its electoral laws and practices in line with international standards and OSCE commitments.

We strongly urge authorities and political parties to redouble their efforts to ensure that the next round of voting on April 10th will be free and fair, and not to allow a repetition of the past rounds' shortcomings.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we would like to signal our support for the excellent work that ODIHR's Election Observation Mission performed in Macedonia during the first two rounds of these municipal elections. We were impressed by its accurate, detailed and useful statement of preliminary findings and conclusions, which once again demonstrates ODIHR's adherence to the highest standards of professionalism and objectivity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.